

City of North Saint Paul
Arts & Culture Commission Meeting Minutes

June 7, 2023

6:30 PM

I. Call to Order

Chair Sonnek called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

II. Roll Call

Tom Sonnek, Chair

Carey Nadeau, Vice Chair

Stacy Maher, Commissioner

Lisa Ritchie, Commissioner (excused absent)

Emily Haeg Nguyen, Commissioner

See Yang, Commissioner

Amanda Black, Commissioner

Cecelia Goracki, Student Commissioner (non-voting) (excused absent)

Lisa Wong, Council Member (non-voting) (excused absent)

Staff

Sara Lang, Commission Secretary

III. Adopt Agenda

On motion by Vice Chair Nadeau, seconded by Commissioner Yang, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to adopt the agenda as presented.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of the 05/03/23 Meeting Minutes

On motion by Commissioner Maher, seconded by Commissioner Black, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to approve the May 3, 2023 minutes as presented.

V. Meeting Open to the Public

There was no public input.

VI. Public Hearings

None

VII. Commission Business, Action Items & Recommendations

A. Project Updates by Subcommittee

A - 1 Project Snowy

Commissioner Yong said the sub committee has done more finalizing of program details since the last meeting. Commission Secretary Sara Lang was able to clarify the Snowy statues will be able to be indoors at Public Works while being worked on. The subcommittee recommends buying the clear coat from this year's budget as other costs will come out of next year's budget and reported transportation costs may be far less than originally estimated, due in part to a possible in-kind donation. The business association has not responded with a date for the project to be presented at a meeting. Commissioner Black said the next step in a few weeks will be reaching out to businesses and organizations concerning participation. The full commission will be asked to form three groups to conduct the outreach using materials prepared by the subcommittee. Each group will be able to decide whether to make the contacts jointly or split them up. Final agreements are in the hands of Commission Secretary Lang and Community Development Director Brandy Howe and should be reviewed by the end of the week.

A - 2 Mural Project

Vice Chair Nadeau said the project was rejected for the MRAC grant but the subcommittee has sent out a call for artists to 30+ muralists around the state and has already had some interest. The call to artists was sent out via email. The Silver Lake Beach bathroom building has been selected as the site. The artist commission will be \$4,000 including materials. Artists have been asked to submit ideas by June 19 with the selection by June 30 and the mural completed by the end of August. The Commission has been asked to present at the June 28 Park and Recreation Commission meeting. Chair Sonnek has prepared a presentation that can be used at the meeting. Artists were asked to submit designs that would be compatible with the surrounding area. Artists were also asked to show ideas for engaging the community.

A - 3 Utility Box Project

Commission Secretary Sara Lang reported the final proofs came back and are in production to install the week of June 19 on the bookstore and on the third and seventh utility boxes. There is still funding for a third project at Roddy's Bar and Grill but it will be necessary to select a design as the initial one using historical society photos was not favorably responded to by the contact. There is about \$1,400 left in the budget for this project.

A - 4 Art Cart

Chair Sonnek reported they have two volunteers for the upcoming art cart event on Friday June 9 at the City Night at the Car Show. The aprons have arrived and are in the art cart.

A - 4 Paint Along

A summer date has not yet been set for this event.

A - 5 Autumn Arts Festival

Commissioner Black said they are waiting to hear about the possibility of additional funding for this year. The call for artists has gone out and is still open until June 26 and could be extended. No vendors can be accepted until it is determined there is a good variety. She plans to attend two other metro area art festivals this month and will report back with ideas and comments. The Commission is also seeking live performers. Commissioners brainstormed about possible performing arts groups to contact. They are also seeking live artist demonstrations. The budget is modest so more funding would have to be obtained to offer stipends to performers. Ms. Lang reported the City has a new part-time employee, Kari Erpenbach, who will be in charge of event planning and will assist with this event. She would like to be invited to subcommittee meetings for the Autumn Arts Festival.

B. 2024 Budget Discussion

The Commission reviewed the proposed budget for 2024 comparing the items to the 2023 budget and making recommendations for next year with amounts and rationale for each category. This budget included increases for each category with the largest increase being to the mural budget. The Commission discussed expanding scope of the activities to highlight the cultures in the community in addition to the Fall Arts Festival which has included multi-cultural offerings. One suggestion was to call the event the "Fall Arts and Culture Festival." Others were to have some stand-alone cultural events and incorporating cultural inclusivity in existing events. The Commission also discussed ways to engage the various cultural groups in the community on what those offerings might look like. The Commission discussed the need for a project calendar next year that's more culture focused, celebrating the diversity in our City. The questions of "what is culture, does the art festival meet that as a celebration of arts and culture" arose. The ACC agreed that we don't have all of the answers but would like feedback from the community whether there are holidays, certain celebrations or celebrating Hmong days with Hmong food, etc. The ACC would like to call in leaders to give feedback of what they would like to see. The Commission refers back to the original mission statement: To inspire connection and community through the development of public art and cultural expression. The ACC realizes they are not the DEI Commission but sometimes there need to be more DEI work within the Commission. Some ideas to acknowledge different culture in the arts could be in the Art Cart projects or the mural project which provides a great opportunity in public spaces to include cultures of North St. Paul. In order to successfully complete this, the ACC stated that they would need input from those communities. Ideas included a sub-committee with this focus, a town hall or inviting

people to our Commission meetings. For each project, the Commission would like to go through a process to be sure they are incorporating input from each community. The Commission decided to include a line item in its budget request for conducting community engagement. The total request for all categories from the Arts and Culture Commission as proposed is \$22,000 which Chair Sonnek pointed out would be double what was requested last year, plus \$7,000 for events. The Commission also decided to schedule time at the July meeting for a discussion of cultural offerings. The Commission asked if there is anyone within the City departments whose job is specific to DEI. Ms. Lang stated this is not. The Commission asked if there are other initiatives or plans in the City for DEI work. Ms. Lang stated there is not. The Commission suggested reviewing Maplewood's Multicultural Advisory Committee and asked if something similar could be adopted in our community. Listening sessions are a good way to start and they cost almost nothing. The Commission would also like to consider that usual methods for reaching out to people might not be enough to reach the people they are looking for. The ACC also spoke on accessibility including the ability to caption meetings in different languages. The ACC would like to establish themselves as a safe space for citizens to share thoughts and concerns.

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. Reports from Staff

Ms. Lang did not have a report.

X. Reports from Commissioners

Commissioner Black asked to have a discussion about the City website and beefing up the Arts and Culture Commission pages. Commissioner Nguyen noted she has been on leave for several months but is ready to begin subcommittee work. Commissioner Maher suggested participating in the community parade. Commissioners asked Ms. Lang to look into postponing the next meeting from July 5 to July 12 due to the July 4 holiday.

XI. Reports from Council Liaison

Council Member Wong was not present.

XII. Adjournment

On motion by Commissioner Maher, seconded by Commissioner Nguyen, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to adjourn.

Chair Sonnek adjourned the Arts & Culture meeting at 8:16 PM

The next regularly scheduled Arts & Culture Commission meeting is July 12th, 2023.